

Investigators notes of Rick Cass conversation

• Telstra

10:33 am

79%



Hi Tamara

Rick Cass here. If you have time, could you call me please. Non urgent - just some clarifications.

Thanks for calling back. I'll try you again at 10:30-11:00?

No worries Rick, speak to you then. Thanks, Tamara



I called Rick back at 10.33 am

- Rick said he mentioned this to Kellie Mahar, but there were some things that he didn't raise with me during his interview, and those things have been playing on his
 - ① He says he still has concerns – some of which are his internal processes and concerns about damage to reputation – but he stepped forward because he believes in justice
 - ② During the interview process – he said he identified [REDACTED] as someone who might have information – but he said he also has other information or things that he knows – he says they are just hearsay – but they are regarding his impression of the

integrity of Jenny and the reputation that precedes her, which is quite well known in our educational community.

- He said he's sure that lots of people have been interviewed, but he says there are others that probably haven't been interviewed because they are related to this instance here with Adam – but personally he thinks that needs to be addressed (re the "reputation")
- Rick said he has found Jenny's professional integrity appalling – he said he knows personally of parents complaining about her behaviour and parents feeling their children have been forced out of schools – he knows her line managers have had difficulty managing her – ARDs difficulty managing her – one ARD couldn't manage her and so Jenny was shifted to someone else because Jenny was impossible
- Rick said there are "rumblings" in the community about her reputation at Cooroy – Rick used to coach rugby in Cooroy and so he would know of these "rumblings" because people would tell him
- He said Jenny is not held in high regard amongst other principals – she is not collegial and demonstrates unprofessional behaviours – he said he thinks this needs to be considered in assessing the versions of events as part of this investigation.
- Rick said this has played on his mind since his interview – he wonders whether others will get asked questions. He said there have been staffroom whispers – one teacher in particular – Rick came across a conversation the teacher was having where she said that Jenny destroyed her – and she's a brilliant and beautiful teacher and Jenny destroyed her
- Rick said Jenny is not a nice lady
- Rick said he didn't want to speak as if held a prejudice against Jenny – because he doesn't and that's not something he wanted to get involved in – he's still affected by his involvement in an investigation from few years ago – he said that investigation was such a devastating thing for him to report someone that was bullying and to be called to give evidence. He said that it's been playing on his mind that this is not a single incident with Adam – this is someone whose character has been brought into question continuously. He says it is unfathomable that she hasn't previously been called to task about her conduct.
- I said that I appreciate Rick sharing this with me and for being so candid, I appreciate that it can be difficult to be candid and open during an investigation process. However, I said the difficulty here is that I am only investigating the allegations concerning Jenny's conduct towards Adam and Tara.
 - Rick says this is similar to what happened with Paula Passi. Her conduct went on for years and years until she caused the death of someone
 - He said the whole professional community fell over when Jenny was promoted to SBSS. He said it was unbelievable. He said he knows of "really good operators" who have been saying that Jenny destroyed them eg they were wanting to reduce their fraction or wanting to return to work after children – and Jenny wasn't at all flexible and just wanted it her way – it was just awful
- I said that I was aware of the essence of the information Rick shared with me today – others have mentioned similar issues with there being "rumblings" or rumours of her prior conduct. I said that while I am not investigating allegations concerning any prior conduct – I am only investigating the allegations about Adam and Tara – people's perceptions of Jenny is something that I will take into account as part of the broader factual matrix

- Rick said he raised concerns about Jenny's ethical behaviour previously – he's had parents crying in his office – Jenny told one kid that he couldn't come back to SBSS and told the parents that too – the parents were crying in his office. Rick said if that's your local school, you are able to come back – Jenny just lied and said they couldn't and she told them that she could do that – in the end the parent changed schools to a school further away. Rick said he raised this with Paul Williams (Jenny's line manager) – he told him that he would be raising it with Janelle Reid – Rick got told that Jenny and Janelle don't get on and that there is some issue there – he said that someone else had to manage Jenny – that's so ridiculous. He said multiple times parents have come to him and said they felt so unwelcome at SBSS – Rick thinks that is unethical – there were process that should have been followed, but Jenny just made a decision
- Rick said that he has worked with Jenny in his current role and it has just been awful – she just lies – she says classes are full when she doesn't want a problem child to come to SBSS – but then makes room if the kid is a good kid. He said parents would come up to him and say "what can we do about what Jenny's doing" to them and telling them things that aren't correct. Rick said it's important to know that with Adam, it's not just a one off – it's a consistent pattern of behaviour more generally. He said there were conversations at a retirement dinner for someone – comments about Jenny – she just lies and says she's doing xyz and people are scared of her – no-one wants to be a target of a bully, so no-one speaks up
- Rick said there are snippets – a teacher last year said Jenny had a knack of sneaking up on people – the next minute she'd appear behind you – like a phantom – you didn't know where she'd be – she'd just be appearing out of nowhere and not introducing herself - just standing there like she wants to catch you out – and this is coming from a burly rugby playing man – her behaviour is just so weird
- I said I'd add this to Rick's interview account and it will form part of the information that I take into account in making findings about the allegations for investigation.
- Rick said that's good - he's not trying to speak out of turn or get her back – but in his dealings with him, Jenny hasn't shown professional integrity and her moral compass is "out" – her behaviours are wrong – he has raised this with Paul Williams as parents were going to be complaining about her behaviour – Paul is now retired – but Paul had a concurring opinion of Jenny's behaviours. Rick says he has no reason to be making stuff up – he's not trying get her back or anything. He just wants "justice for Adam", so he wanted to mention this. He said Jenny's reputation preceded her and there is a common theme. Rick said his career was over as soon as I became a witness before – he made an internal disclosure that he revealed to EQ – the Director General threatened to have Rick sacked as he didn't like what Rick said – Rick was humiliated – he didn't know what to do – so no point doing anything about it. He will never get over that. But he wanted to raise this about Jenny as he thought it was important.
- I said again that I'd take it as part of Rick's account from his original interview and would consider the information as part of the background – but I clarified that I can't investigate the "rumours" or "rumblings" about previous issues with Jenny's conduct
 - Rick said Jenny is a bully – she will have her allies
 - He said people that haven't been spoken to will have the most information – people will be too scared to speak up if they haven't been compelled to ask questions – he's worried about repercussions for those that have spoken out – Jenny isn't going anywhere unless she gets the sack...they'll get squeezed out.
- I said to Rick that in assessing who I would speak to, I needed to balance the confidentiality of the investigation and not sharing the content of the allegations more broadly than is necessary on the one hand, and considering whether individuals potentially have significant information relevant to the allegations. I said that I've reviewed a large body of materials and I've spoken to a large number of witnesses – I think I have spoken to everyone who has substantial information to contribute relevant to the allegations. I said that this is not an investigation into

the cause of Adam's death – that's for the coroner / WorkCover – All I am doing is a factual investigation into the specific allegations. So there are limits on what I can look into.

- Rick said he understands
- Rick said there are known bullies here – eg Paula Passi – no-one liked that woman – no surprise that she was found wanting in her professional conduct – everyone knew it.
- Tracy Blandford and Gerrard O'Brien have been in those roles for 25 years – they are very placid and non-confrontational people. They are not confident people – they are soft natured and non-confrontational – they aren't pulling up their "big undies" and stepping up to Jenny ever – that's Rick's fear – that the integrity of anyone's contribution will be affected by their thoughts of their own professional and personal situation
- I said to Rick that in any investigation process, there will be people who might be more open and candid and others who are more reserved and perhaps not as willing to share their full thoughts – that's something that I don't have control over – this isn't a court process and I cannot compel answers – but it is something that I do take into account in attributing weight to people's accounts ie what their motivations might be for giving a particular account.
- Rick says it's what's been left out that worries him – he said he just didn't want to not share this with me – he said he had regrets from the other process in not naming other individuals to come forward – so he just didn't want things to be left unturned here
- I thanked Rick for sharing this with me and for being candid and open with me, I said that I appreciate that can be difficult.
- Rick said he feels better now to have it off his chest.
- I reminded Rick about the EAP services available and said if he thinks they would assist him, I'd encourage him to use them.
 - Rick said he has – he's had two conversations with someone from EAP and that's been very helpful.
 - I said that's good – I'd encourage him to continue using that service if it is assisting him.
- I thanked Rick for his time and said he is free to contact me if he has any concerns.

****END AT 11.03 AM****

TLV

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